

NEBRASKA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

NEWS RELEASE

The following news release was written and distributed by the United States Senate Youth Program:

Nebraska Students Selected for United States Senate Youth Program

-- Students From Auburn and Lincoln Headed to Washington, D. C. and to Receive \$5,000 Scholarship--

For questions about your state's delegates, alternates or selection process, please contact your state selection administrator: Ms. Carol Wipf at (402) 471-2446 or carol.wipf@nebraska.gov. For more general information about the United States Senate Youth Program, please contact Program Director Rayne Guilford at 800-425-3632, www.ussenateyouth.org.

Senators Ben Nelson and Mike Johanns today announced the names of the two students who have been selected as delegates to the 50th Anniversary United States Senate Youth Program (USSYP) that will be held March 3 – 10, 2012 in Washington, D.C.

Brent Comstock of Auburn and Kathryn Rentfro of Lincoln were chosen from across the state to be part of the group of 104 student delegates who will attend the program's 50th Anniversary Washington Week.

The USSYP was created by Senate Resolution 324 in 1962 and has been sponsored by the Senate and fully funded by The Hearst Foundations since inception. Originally proposed by Senators Kuchel, Mansfield, Dirksen and Humphrey, the impetus for the program as stated in Senate testimony was "to increase young Americans' understanding of the interrelationships of the three branches of government, the caliber and responsibilities of federally elected and appointed officials, and the vital importance of democratic decision making not only for America but for people around the world."

Each year this extremely competitive merit-based program brings 104 of the most outstanding high school students — two from each state, the District of Columbia and the Department of Defense Education Activity — to Washington, D.C. for an intensive week-long study of the federal government and the people who lead it. The overall mission of the program is to help instill within each class of USSYP student delegates more profound knowledge of the American political process and a lifelong commitment to public service.

In addition to the program week, The Hearst Foundations provide each of the 104 student delegates with a \$5,000 undergraduate college scholarship with encouragement to continue coursework in government, history and public affairs. Transportation and all expenses for Washington Week are also provided by The Hearst Foundations, as stipulated in S.Res.324; no government funds are utilized.

Brent Comstock attends Auburn Public School where he serves as junior class treasurer. Brent participated in track, cross country, swing choir and various FBLA and drama performances. He plans on attending a four year university to study computer design and engineering.

Kathryn Rentfro attends Lincoln East High School and serves as Student Council press secretary. Kathryn is very active within her school where she plays tennis and is a cheerleader. She is very passionate about community service and recently organized an event to benefit the Make-a-Wish Foundation. In the future, she hopes to attend law school and go into politics.

Chosen as alternates to the 2012 program were Jessica Mayes, a resident of Phillips, who attends Aurora High School and Rosalie Plofchan, a resident of Omaha, who attends Marian High School.

The chief educational officer in each state selects the delegates after nomination by teachers and principals. This year's delegates were designated by Dr. Roger D. Breed, Commissioner of Education.

While in Washington the student delegates will attend meetings and briefings with Senators and Congressional staff, the President, a Justice of the Supreme Court, leaders of cabinet agencies, an Ambassador to the United States and top members of the national media. The students will also tour many of the national monuments and several museums and they will stay at the historic Mayflower Hotel in downtown Washington, D.C.

In addition to outstanding leadership abilities and a strong commitment to volunteer work, the student delegates rank academically in the top one percent of their states among high school juniors and seniors. Now more than 5,000 strong, alumni of the program continue to excel and develop impressive qualities that are often directed toward public service. Among the many distinguished alumni are: Senator Susan Collins, the first delegate to be elected U.S. Senator; New Jersey Governor Chris Christie, the first delegate to be elected governor; Congressman Cory Gardner, the first delegate to be elected to the U.S. House of Representatives; former Chief Judge Robert Henry, U.S. Court of Appeals for the Tenth Circuit; former Ambassador to West Germany Richard Burt, and former Presidential Advisors Thomas "Mack" McLarty and Karl Rove. Additional notables include former Lt. Governor of Idaho David LeRoy, former President of the Progressive Policy Institute Robert Shapiro, military officers, members of state legislatures, Foreign Service officers, top congressional staff, healthcare providers and university educators.

Members of the USSYP 2012 50th Anniversary Senate Advisory Committee are: Co-Chairs — Senator Jeff Bingaman of New Mexico and Senator Susan M. Collins of Maine. Advisory Committee — Senator Richard J. Durbin of Illinois, Senator Kirsten E. Gillibrand of New York, Senator Jeff Merkley of Oregon, Senator Barbara A. Mikulski of Maryland, Senator Mike Crapo of Idaho, Senator Johnny Isakson of Georgia, Senator Richard G. Lugar of Indiana and Senator Jeff Sessions of Alabama. Each year, the Honorary Co-Chairs of the program are the Senate Majority and Minority Leaders and the Vice President of the United States.
